

Textiles from Table Scraps

Throughout human history, fiber artists have used materials from nature to create beautiful textiles. Follow the steps below and put your leftovers to work making Earth-friendly fiber art. Find inspiration in [textiles from the DMA's collection](#) created with natural dyes.

To get started, choose a piece of cotton or linen fabric to dye, like a white T-shirt, kitchen towel, or pillowcase. You can also dye thick paper. Use fruit or vegetable scraps from your next meal or save some in the freezer until you are ready to dye your fabric.

Here are some common household dyeing ingredients and the colors they create:

Red/Pink: Pomegranates, beets, raspberries, blueberries, cherries, red and pink roses, avocado skins and seeds, lavender

Orange: Carrots, orange peels, yellow onion skins

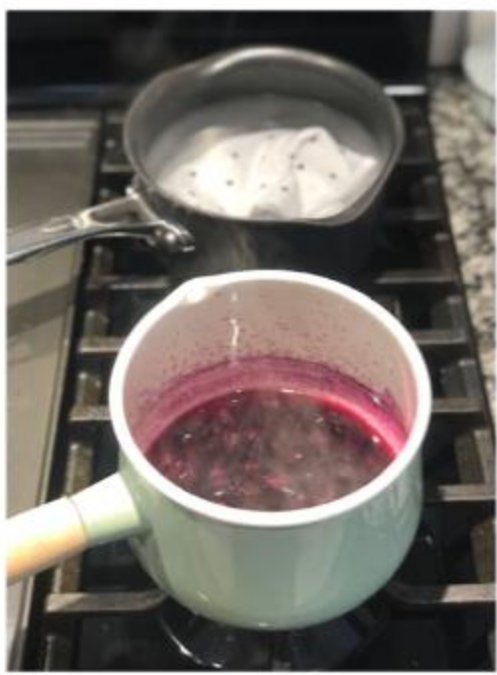
Yellow: Lemon peels, celery leaves, turmeric, paprika, marigolds, sunflowers

Green: Spinach, parsley, peppermint leaves, artichokes

Blue/Purple: Blackberries, red cabbage, grapes, blueberries

Brown: Tea, coffee

1. If you are dyeing with fruits, boil your fabric in a solution of 1/2 cup salt and 8 cups water. If you are dyeing with vegetables, use 1/2 cup vinegar and 2 cups water. After boiling for one hour, rinse in cold water. This helps the dye stick to your fabric.
2. Cut your fruit or vegetable scraps into small pieces and boil them in water until the water changes color—up to one hour. Use a ratio of 2 parts water for 1 part dye material.
3. Once cooled, strain the water into a bowl and soak your wet fabric in the dye until it reaches the desired color. The longer you leave your fabric in the dye, the darker it will be.
4. The next day, rinse your fabric in cold water and air dry. It's best to wash home-dyed fabrics by hand or separately from other laundry until you are sure the colors won't transfer.



1-2.



3.



4.

If you want to take this project to the next level, try these advanced steps.

- Make a batik textile by painting on your fabric with beeswax before you dye it. Any area covered in wax will not be dyed. To remove the wax after dyeing, boil the fabric in water with a little dish soap until the wax comes off.
- Make a gradient by dipping your entire piece of fabric into the dye and lifting it out incrementally.
- Make a tie-dye or striped textile by tying off sections of your fabric with rubber bands or strings and then squirting each section with a dye.